

Jesus's Acceptance

Text: Matthew 26; 42

"YOUR WILL BE DONE" WAS WHAT JESUS SAID

The acceptance of what was to befall Him, is what separates Jesus from mere humans. We can read in the paper on almost any given day of cases where someone who has been convicted of a crime is appealing for a new trial. Even people who have been caught in the perpetration of a crime, or caught as we usually say, red handed, plead not guilty to the charge. The human reaction to anything that threatens our life, our existence, or our accustomed way of living is to fight it with all the forces at our disposal. This is in direct contrast to the reaction of Jesus.

We are told in our Scripture that Jesus went to the garden called Gethsemane. There were no gardens of any size in Jerusalem, because it was a city built on a hill and every inch that could be used for building purposes was used. The wealthy citizens had their private gardens on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The word Gethsemane means, an olive vat or an olive press. There isn't much doubt that this was indeed a garden with olive trees in it. To be able to go to a garden such as this would require that the owner would have to give permission to do so. Remember ~~that~~ this was a private garden and not for the use of the public. This would have meant that Jesus was a friend of the owner. It is truly an amazing thing that the friends of Jesus are nameless in the Gospels. The only one who is named is Joseph of Arimathea. But there was the man who gave Jesus the donkey on which He rode on Palm Sunday. Then there was the man who loaned Him the upper room to eat the Last Supper. And finally the man who loaned Him the use of the garden.

There are certain things that we can see when we ponder the praying in the garden by Jesus. We first witness the agony of Jesus. He was very sure at this time that His death was imminent. The burden of knowing this must have hung like a weight around His neck. No one wants to die at the tender age of 33. Here is where the struggle for Jesus really began in earnest. He

had to submit His will to that of God's will or else turn His back on God's will and let God's plan be frustrated. Here we see the lesson that all of us learn at one time or another in our lives. And that is the lesson of learning how to accept what we cannot understand. Jesus had to learn this lesson too. All He knew was that the will of God was calling Him to go on. He knew that death awaited Him in the near future, and He knew that as He stood in that garden ~~that~~ He had to make a choice between doing the will of God, or refusing to do the will of God. The pressure on Him must have ^{been} tremendous at this moment. The temptation to run, to get away from it would almost be overpowering. A Christian Theologian of Africa named Tertullian who lived around 150 years after the life of Jesus, tells of a saying that is attributed to Jesus, but is not found in any of the Gospels yet has been handed down to this day. Quote "No one who has not been tempted can enter the kingdom of Heaven." This is to say that each man has his own private Gethsemane. Each man comes to the place where he either must accept or refuse what to him is the will of God. And this is where each man has to learn to say, "^{your} ~~thy~~ will be done."

IN MATTHEW & MARK

Then here we see the loneliness of Jesus. He took His three chosen disciples with Him. But they were so exhausted that they slept and Jesus may as well have been alone for all the comfort they were to Him. But even had they remained awake and alert, the battle had to be fought by Jesus alone. No one but Him could reach the decision that must be reached. No one but He was able to decide which way to go. Each man at some time in his life knows the loneliness of facing decisions that must be made, and can only be made by him. But we have the comfort of knowing that Jesus went through this and this should give us the strength we need to go on.

Then we see the trust of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark tells this story very much like Matthew, and well it should because Matthew used Mark's Gospel as his reference book. But there is one little difference between Matthew and Mark and that is the word Abba, is placed at the beginning of Jesus's prayer. He prayed Abba Father. There is a certain loveliness to this word that

is unknown to most people. Thesword Abba was used by young children as an endearing term to their fathers. sort of like daddy, only with a more loving meaning about it. Jesus prayed to God as a child, in complete trust, "Not as ^{STAY} ~~WHAT I WANT, BUT WHAT YOU WANT~~ ^{BUT NOT} "I would have it, but as you will have it." This would take complete trust and love in God for Him to do this. But do it He did and His trust and love endured with Him until His death on that cross.

The example that Jesus set for us is indeed a difficult one
to follow. There are different ways in which the acceptance of what life brings
is handled by different people. Some people very graciously accept what life
has to offer and grin and bear it. Others complain their way through life ac-
cepting what comes to them grudgingly. The thing that determines how well we
can accept the problems of life is how well do we accept disappointments?
Suppose for instance we had planned a trip somewhere and because of illness we
had to call it off. Would we curse and swear and bemoan the fact that life
^{OR WOULD WE SAY THAT COOKIE CRUMBED}
was unfair and we were being pushed around etc. There is a bit of philo-sophy
mother has used for years ~~and I have sort of adopted it as my own also.~~
This is the way of accepting disappointments with the consolation that what
we wanted or desired was ^{IT WAS NOT} not to be. That God did not mean ~~T~~for us to have it
in the first place. ~~MOTHERS ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN DO THIS FOR THEIR CHILDREN~~
~~XX~~ ^{FOR HER FAMILY}
~~XX~~ This philosophy has worked very well, in
^{IT WORKS} fact ^{WE} to the extent that ^{OUR} generally find out later that ~~my~~ wants or desires
^{OUR}would not be in the best interest ^{PEOPLE}.of my self or my family. How we accept what
life brings our way, very often is a determining factor of what kind of a person
we are. Here is where many people come into conflict with society as well as
the law. Because of the fact that some of these people are living in conditions
which are below that of others ^{FEEL THEY} they must rebel against it. We have seen this
^{IN OUR COUNTRY FOR PAST FEW YEARS} happen the past two summers and we are told that we will see it happen this
~~summer so well.~~ Now I am not saying that these people have no right to ex-
press their disapproval of their plight, but I am saying that they have no
right to destroy what belongs to other people simply because they cannot accept

what life has brought to them. We each have things in our lives that we would gladly change if we could. But because there are people in the world who can live a lot better than some other people, does not mean that we should all riot to get this for ourselves without working for it. Yet this is the philosophy of some people in our society today. Here again we find that we must learn to accept many things which we do not understand. We never know what opportunity to serve may be ours because of the way we accept the events that come to us. Any event may bring us agony, loneliness, or a sense of inability to cope with life. But we can overcome all of these things just as Jesus did if we put our trust in our Father.

God does not afflict us with more than we can possibly bear. Although there may be times ^{WHEN WE} ~~that~~ are not so sure of this. It is human nature to doubt, to have misgivings, and to worry. But we can turn our doubts and worries into peace and comfort by trusting in God. Jesus gave us the example of complete trust in God. The trust that Jesus showed during His time of suffering was like that of a little child. But He showed His love for His Father by taking Him at His word and submitting to His will. Our love and our trust should parallel the love and trust of Jesus. If He was able to submit to the will of His Father, under the very extreme circumstances that He had to face, then there is no reason why we can't do likewise in the very mild circumstances we face. God loves us. We are each one of His children. As a Father, we should be able to come to Him and talk to Him through prayer, and then be willing to do His will as He reveals it to us in our lives. As followers of Jesus, let us each try to follow His example and try to live our lives each day, striving to do the will of our Father. Let us pray.

"His Acceptance!"

Text: Matthew 26:42b,

My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done."

At the foot of the Mt. of Olives is an enclosed spot that is called Gethsemane. There are presently eight olive trees there, and it is believed that these remaining eight trees were there when Jesus came and prayed in this garden. We are told that beggars line the road around this place, but they only bother the visitors upon their return from the garden. The reason being, that the individual who has gone to the garden in which Jesus prayed, and has knelt ~~on the spot on which Jesus knelt~~ perhaps on the very spot on which Jesus knelt, is moved very deeply and is more receptive to giving to those who seek help.

This place has become a shrine which ~~all~~ is a must to all visitors who strive to retrace the steps of Jesus. Thus beggars and merchants are prone to take advantage of a golden opportunity such as this.

We are also told that at the time of Jesus there were no gardens of any size in Jerusalem, because it was a city built on a hill, and every inch of building space was used to the best advantage. The wealthy citizens ^{private} had gardens on the slopes of the Mt. Of Olives. The word Gethsemane means, "Olive Vat", or "Olive Press." It was believed that in order to have access to a garden on the Mt. Of Olives, a person had to know the owner. Thus it is thought that Jesus was friends with yet another influential person who owned this garden. We have seen in this passion story of Jesus that there have been several instances in which ~~an~~ unknown persons, and probably persons of wealth supported the ministry of Jesus from behind the scenes. Someone supplied the donkey upon which Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Someone supplied the upper room in which they ate the Last Supper.. Someone must have supplied the garden in which Jesus prayed. The only instance that ~~ix~~ records the silent supporters of Jesus, is the report that Joseph of Arimathea comes

forawrd to claim the body of Jesus after He is dead.

There are certain things we can see when we look at the acceptance of Jesus. We first see that He had a certain air of confidence in what he was doing. We can say this because in a few verses preceeding what we read as Scripture, we read, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mt. Of Olives." Now although the singing of this hymn was a part of the Passover Feast and involved the singing of Psalm 115 - 118, just this once Jesus could have requested that it be omitted if he were so troubled that he could not bear to ~~xxxxxx~~ sing before his arrest. But the very nature of the Psalms sung ^{speaks} ~~xxxxxx~~ of a strength that comes from outside of ourselves. Perhaps we have often thought of Jesus going to his cross as a man defeated abd beaten. As a man filled with dread and forboding. But he went instead as a man singing - with a heart newly dedicated to God and a spirit filled with a strange joy. Listen to the words of this last Psalm of the hymn they sung, and see if it is not a song that would uplift the soulf of any man. (Read Psalm 118).

Thus we see here a note of triumphant acceptance.

But even with this joy in the knowledge of the strength of God, Jesus had intermittant periods of anguish. We can only compare it with the feeble human comparison, of someone who is awaiting the start of an important event or moment in his or her life. Something like an acotr or actress awaiting the opening curtain. Or in sports, awaiting the opening kickoff, or the first pitch. All of these moments cause bütterflies, and a certain sense of dread and forboding. I am sure that all of us at one time or another have been involved in similar circumstances and have questioned ourselves about it, asking the question, "What am I doing here? How did I ever let myself get talked into this?" But after the beginning takes place, we are able to fulfill our role whatever it may be. Thus it probably was with Jesus, only on a much more greater scale.

Here in this garden the real struggle actually began for Jesus. He knew that all of other events were mere preliminaries leading up to the main event. Now the main event was only moments away as he knelt here in prayer. Here is also where Satan could once again come forth to lead his thoughts and his determination away from doing the will of the Father. Thoughts such as his being too young to die, what purpose was really being served in this sacrifice, why did this have to happen and so on?

His prayer in the garden was, "My Father." By coming to God in this manner he came to him as ~~xxxxx~~ any child would seeking guidance and help from a loving father. But through all of this is the lesson for each of us, and that is accepting what we cannot understand. There has been considerable argument down through the years as to whether Jesus really knew and understood all of the ramifications of the act which he was about to perform. Whether he did or not is really immaterial. What is more important is the fact that we have before us ~~xxxxxxxx~~ a lesson on complete acceptance of what life is setting forth, and a complete ~~xxxxx~~ reliance that God will see us through. This was what Jesus showed most strongly in His acceptance. His attitude ~~xxx~~ as determined by his actions was just about, "Well, I ~~xxxx~~ do not understand all that you are asking of me, but if this is what you want me to do, then I will do it. You have led me and directed me in the past, and I have been blessed by your help, so I'll continue to accept what you give to me, for I know it will turn out for the best."

Many times I talk to people about the problems and concerns of life, and often the question arises, "Why does this have to happen?" Or they will ask, "Why me," or, "Why my family?" All of these questions are legitimate and we do indeed seek for answers. But there are no hard and fast answers. We can only say as Jesus, "What you want me to do I will do, and what you want me to accept I will accept."

Which brings us to our third point and that is the answer of Jesus, "Thy will be done." In the perfect prayer that Jesus gave to his disciples and to us, are to be found the words, "Thy will be done." Here he uses it in his own personal prayer to God, thus showing us that this should always be our prayer. ~~My~~ "Not what I want God, but what You want for me, ~~or~~ whatever it is you want me to do." This should be the example that we follow and pattern our prayers from.

To cry as Jesus, "Let this cup pass from me" is only a natural human cry, and there is nothing wrong with it. But always we must add to it, "Nevertheless, not what I want, but what you want for me." Jesus was able to do this simply because all of his life was lived in this manner. But you see we try to lean upon our own wills and our own ways. Our own will becomes so dear to us, that nothing else seems reasonable, or is so right for us. It is then that God takes a secondary role, and we have become self-sufficient.

But Jesus showed us what true sonship is, by his renunciation of self, and his acceptance of God's will for his life. And his acceptance of God's will for his death is just that much stronger a case for our following in his steps.

In the Gospel of John he said, "My meat is to do the will of him who sent me." Running through all of the life of Jesus and in particular his last week of his life, is the thread of placing his life in the hands of God and seeking to follow what God had ~~desired~~ willed for him to do.

Our love and our trust of the Father should parallel that of Jesus. Like a little child he accepted God at his word, and did His Father's will. Alfred Lord Tennyson once wrote in his poem "Memoriam," "Our wills are ours, to make them thine." This is how Jesus accepted his life, and his death. This is the acceptance that God also demands of us. Let us each strive to accept God at His word and to know that He will be with us as Jesus promised in the Gospel, "Lo I am with you always ~~to the~~ even unto the end of the world."